



EARN Indiana : What is Experiential Learning ?

Students participating in the EARN Indiana program must have the opportunity to complete work tasks that provide career awareness, exploration and preparation. For this reason, the Commission will provide reimbursement only for positions that it determines involve experiential learning. While the definition of experiential learning varies across different sources and fields, the Commission is providing the following guidance to assist employers in crafting positions that provide experiential learning.

Internships that provide **experiential learning opportunities** will likely display the following:

- The intern is exposed to a variety of departments, operations, people and business settings within the organization.
- The internship supervisor provides the intern with a list of competencies or professional skills the intern should learn during the course of employment and assigns tasks that help the intern gain those competencies.
- Assigned work is at a difficulty level equal to or slightly higher than the intern's skill and knowledge level.
- Assigned work requires the intern to research answers to questions and apply skills and problem solving abilities.
- Short term assignments the intern completes contribute to the organization's long-term results. The intern is provided context with assignments to understand how the project fits into long-term plans.
- The intern has the opportunity to work with a team of employees on one or more projects.

Examples of appropriate **primary work tasks** may include:

- Contribute to project design or development
- Develop and carry-out a marketing plan or business strategy
- Develop advertising and promotional strategies
- Contact and relationship management and general customer service
- Participate in networking opportunities
- Write reports, handbooks, manuals or newsletters
- Coordinate and perform education/outreach
- Develop presentations
- Design posters, charts and graphs
- Respond to inquiries, leads and referrals
- Create and maintain database
- Participate in various staff meetings in more than one department/level
- Perform software or hardware modifications
- Develop, create and maintain website
- Conduct research, studies or surveys
- Perform laboratory tests
- Accounting: General Ledger, Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable

While it is acceptable for an intern to occasionally complete tasks that are not experiential (work generally thought of as “clerical tasks” or “routine support tasks”), these activities should not make up more than 25 percent of the intern’s work responsibilities. Tasks that would **not be considered experiential** include (but are not limited to):

- Cleaning
- Making coffee
- Running errands (e.g., picking up lunch for supervisor, dropping off dry-cleaning, etc.)
- Making copies, faxing, filing or shredding documents
- Preparing and sorting mail
- Answering phones for the purpose of directing calls to others (i.e., “switchboard” work)
- Scheduling appointments for others
- Entering information into a program or database (e.g., appointments, contact information, customer records)
- Maintaining inventory of and ordering office supplies
- Setting up meeting rooms
- Transcribing letters and meeting notes
- Generating form letters and documents

Experiential internships should also include opportunities for future career development. The internship should allow students to develop personal contacts, which may lead to job placement opportunities and build self-confidence, leadership and good communication skills. Additionally, the internship program should provide the student with **career development skills and job search tactics** through one or more of the following:

- Setting up mock interviews with supervisor or other staff members to give the intern practice interviewing and feedback about interview behavior and responses.
- Reviewing and critiquing the intern’s résumé and helping the intern include the internship on his or her résumé.
- Introducing the intern to leaders in the organization and/or the field and providing the opportunity for the intern to get to know them.
- Providing the intern with a list of networking contacts that the intern could use for future job searches.
- Other activities designed by the organization to increase the intern’s employment prospect and job search skills.

While this explanation is intended to provide general guidance about what type of tasks constitutes experiential learning, each position will be individually reviewed by the Commission to determine its eligibility. Some tasks may be more experiential and appropriate depending on the nature of the position and the student’s field of study.